

Dr. Kaminski's Farewell Message to the Acquisition Workforce

People are our most important asset. Our defense acquisition workforce is blessed with some of the very best and brightest people in the world. During the past two and one-half years, I have observed on many occasions that our workforce is highly dedicated, motivated, and becoming more empowered with each passing day.

Our acquisition workforce is the envy of my counterparts around the world. A couple of months ago, my Russian counterpart asked me how many members of our workforce actually had the authority to sign contracts on behalf of the United States Government. In Russia, decisions are highly controlled—very few people have this authority. My counterpart was floored by my response: a couple of *thousand* contracting officers can sign contracts. At that moment, it became apparent to my Russian colleague that the strength of our system was our *people*.

Quite often, I hear the prevailing view expressed in Washington, D.C., that the defense acquisition workforce is too large. Very little thought is given to the fact that the workforce must first become *better* before it can become *smaller*. I have worked with very small teams that were extremely effective in managing highly classified programs. A key factor was the quality of the people—we were able to select the very best for our team. Our workforce is qualitatively better today than it was four years ago, but we still have a long way to go to create a culture of continuous education and training.

One of the most significant accomplishments made over the past two and one-half years has been the wholesale reengineering of the way we support the warfighter, using teams working together in parallel rather than our past sequential, serial approach. Integrated Product Teams—composed of warfighters, testers, trainers, doctrine writers, acquirers, and their industry contractors—have dramatically improved the way we do business and have significantly shortened our acquisition cycle times. This process reengineering initiative began with OSD-led Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations (ACTD), continued with the fielding of a Bosnia Command and Control Augmentation (BC²A) sys-



tem, and has expanded with the Army's Force XXI experiment, the Navy's "Smart Ship" project, and the stand-up of the Air Force's Battle Labs.

I take the most pride in seeing our people willing to think "out-of-the-box," pushing hard to be better. It means our incentives and rewards are beginning to work. Our program managers are not afraid to take prudent risks to do what is best. There is a much greater sense that we are all on the same team and are all working toward a common goal.

It has been a pleasure to work with you—the finest acquisition professionals in the world. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

— Paul G. Kaminski
Under Secretary of Defense
(Acquisition & Technology)